

road guards who would know when it was safe to cross the highway.

Once posted, the road guards put on fluorescent vests and made sure their flashlights worked. Infrared glowsticks were placed on both sides of the highway crossings to help the drivers see where the crossing points were while wearing their NVGs.

The lead vehicle was a low-back HMMWV that contained four Marines. The driver was fresh out of driving school and his A-driver was experienced, with one deployment in Iraq under his belt. This was the first time the driver ever had driven a HMMWV with NVGs, so the A-driver was helping him learn how.

As the convoy approached the second crossing point, the two road guards posted themselves on opposite sides of the road to look for oncoming traffic. Once posted, one of the road guards observed the headlights of an oncoming vehicle approximately a quarter of a mile away. The guard started walking toward the oncoming vehicle, waving his flashlight in an effort to motion the vehicle to stop. In a matter of seconds, it became clear to the road guard that the vehicle heading his way was a semi-truck, and it was traveling very fast.

Meanwhile, the lead vehicle of the convoy still was approaching the crossing point, unaware of the oncoming vehicle. The A-driver told the driver to pay attention to the directions of the road guards, that they would let him know when it was safe to cross.

With the lead HMMWV still moving forward and starting to cross the road, the road guard realized that the semi-truck was not slowing down. He motioned with his flashlight for the lead vehicle to stop, and the other road guard started running toward the lead vehicle to warn of the oncoming truck.

Meanwhile, the driver of the lead HMMWV was taking cues from his A-driver to keep moving forward. Neither the driver, nor the A-driver, looked to their left or right before entering the roadway. The driver believed the flashlight signals coming from the road guard meant to keep driving, rather than to stop, so he continued rolling forward into the intersection.

Seconds later, the semi-truck realized that a vehicle was crossing his path, slammed on his brakes, and ended up broadsiding the right side of the HMMWV.

This collision left two Marines shaken up with minor injuries, two Marines with broken femurs, a totaled HMMWV, and a damaged civilian semi-truck. Based on the traffic investigation, the semi-truck was traveling approximately 55 mph at the time the driver slammed on his brakes. The impact pushed the HMMWV sideways almost 30 feet. Fortunately for the Marines in the HMMWV, the semi-truck only was carrying a forklift on a flatbed. If the semi-truck had been carrying a fully loaded trailer, the accident would have been much worse.

Why did this mishap occur? First, the unit did not follow its own plan to have signs posted at the intersection, indicating NVG driver training. Second, vehicles were not to cross the highway with blackout lights. If these precautions had been in place this way, all oncoming highway traffic would have been alerted of the training in the area. In the event that road guards had failed to stop the convoy, the oncoming traffic would have been able to see the convoy because they would have had their headlights on. Third, the road guards clearly did not understand their responsibilities. One of them believed he was supposed to stop the civilian traffic on the highway, while the other believed he was supposed to stop the convoy in case of oncoming traffic. Last, although the driver of the HMMWV was disoriented because he was wearing NVGs, he failed to look left or right before crossing the intersection.

Ultimately, this mishap could have been prevented if the unit had implemented their own plan and used the road signs, followed the local written procedures that prohibits crossing highways with blackout lights, and made sure the instructions of the road guards clearly were understood. **GW**

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